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231617Z Jun 05

ACTION AF-00

INFO LOG-00 NP-00 AID-00 AMAD-00 CIAE-00 INL-00 DODE-00  
PERC-00 EAP-00 EB-00 OIGO-00 H-00 TEDE-00 INR-00  
IO-00 LAB-01 L-00 NRC-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 OES-00  
OIC-00 OIG-00 NIMA-00 PA-00 MCC-00 GIWI-00 PRS-00  
P-00 FMPC-00 SP-00 STR-00 TRSE-00 R-00 EPAE-00  
SCRS-00 PRM-00 DRL-00 G-00 SAS-00 SWCI-00 /001W  
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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8774  
INFO ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 001226

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/RSA, AF/W, DRL FOR KDURKIN, LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/17/2015  
TAGS: PHUM EAID KDEM ELAB SOCI GH  
SUBJECT: GHANA'S TROKOSI REVISITED

REF: A. ACCRA 002509

1B. ACCRA 02661

Classified By: Amb. Mary C. Yates for reasons 1.5 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: After another investigation of the issue, Post has been unable to find evidence of systematic human rights abuses in the traditional Trokosi practice. Fewer than 50 Trokosis are currently serving in shrines, and Trokosi is a dying practice. Some organizations have used fraudulent allegations of sexual abuse and forced detention of Trokosis to attract donor funding. Some religious and NGO activists are calling for the "liberation" of hundreds of alleged Trokosi victims in July 2005 in what could be another ruse to attract donor support and funding. End summary.

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A HISTORY OF FRAUD  
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12. (C) Trokosi is a traditional religious practice in which families send a family member to be trained at a fetish shrine for a period lasting from several weeks to three years to atone for an offense committed by a family member or to obtain divine assistance with fertility. Families predominantly choose to send girls, often a virgin, sometimes under the age of 10 but more frequently in her teens.

13. (C) In the late 1970s, missionaries began attempting to convert practitioners of these traditional African beliefs. By 1997, the religious organization International Needs Ghana (ING) garnered support from international media and NGOs in its campaign to end Trokosi. ING alleged that as many as 5,000 Trokosi girls in Ghana were forced to labor on shrine priests' farms, detained against their will, denied schooling and medical treatment, and subjected to physical and sexual abuse. The Embassy began to treat Trokosi as a serious human rights abuse in its annual Human Rights Report. In 1999, ING's most prominent Trokosi victim won the Reebok Human Rights award and coverage in Newsweek. That year, post granted ING \$10,000 to support its anti-Trokosi campaign.

14. (C) Post's six previous investigations since 2001 (see reftels) suggest that ING recruited 2,200 women, many of whom were not genuine Trokosis, to participate in mock liberations. Participants were offered \$28 each and told they could attend ING's vocational training schools in exchange for their "liberation." ING was assisted by Ghana's leading human rights body, the Commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) who received hundreds of dollars in honoraria for participating in these events. National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) representatives also received payments. Even the Reebok award winner who claimed she was sexually abused later disavowed her story to embassy officials.

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CURRENT CLAIMS OF ABUSES  
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15. (C) ING's claims were widely discredited, the organization adopted a lower profile, and an international observer who has lived and visited Klikor numerous times told us ING's Volta Region representatives now steer clear of Trokosi and have taken up other causes. However, Every Child Ministries (ECM), the Rescue Foundation and the International Humanitarian Campaign Against the Exploitation of Children

have made fresh allegations of widespread abuses.

16. (C) On April 27-30, Poloff and PolFSN visited the Volta Region to investigate these allegations. Based on post's research and interviews, the current allegations of widespread human rights abuses appear baseless.

17. (C) The Afrikan Renaissance Mission (ARM), the umbrella organization for African traditional believers and practitioners, recognizes 23 Trokosi shrines in the Volta Region. Several of these shrines are inactive because the priests have died and are not being replaced. Even the most active shrines had no more than three Trokosis serving. ARM leaders told Poloff that organizations staging